





N. WM. D. KELLEY, OF PA.,

ON

FREEDMEN'S AFFAIRS.

VERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEB. 23, 1864.

use having under consideration the bill to establish a Bureau of Freedmen's Affairs, Mr. Speaker said:

PEAKER: Mutation is the law of our life. Paradoxical as it may seem, no law is immutable or inexorable than this. "Passing away" is written on all things. Nothing bideth in one stay; and sir, much of pain and anguish as ever recurring changes, the inevitable product of swift winged time, may bring the sole source of hope and aspiration; they are the method and sure ground of progress, social and political. Stagnation is death. Bats and owls usually have their place in the economy of nature, but in their love of the twilight darkness that succeed the day they do not symbolize the wise and sagacious statesman. That nation is in a bad way whose legislators' intellectual vision is back of their heads; whose faith ignores eternal laws because they are inaudible; who lay hold only of such palpable facts as that pepper is hot in the month of June, when the sun is at meridian it should be noon by the almanac; and whose songs no joyful prophecy of a better future, but spends itself on a sad refrain of legend and tradition. The wise statesman—indeed, he who is at all a statesman is keen and far sighted—notes the ever re-occurring new facts of the new world, watches the progress of sentiment and opinion. He observes the development of the material resources of his country and of the world. He pays regard to the eternal laws of justice, right, and truth, and from time to time so modifies our habits, customs, and institutions as are vicious or essentially temporary and contrary to the order of society into harmony with nature's laws, and secures prosperity and peace of the people.

Our statesmanship would have averted the rebellion that now scourges our country. Our fathers of the country saw the character of slavery. They gave us the act of 1787, which forever prohibited it north and west of the Ohio river. They excluded from our Constitution the words "slave" and "slavery," because they believed the institution to be transitory, and would not cause the blush of shame to mantle the cheeks of their descendants by recording in that enduring instrument the fact that an institution so incompatible with its scope and spirit had existed under it. Had their counsels prevailed, or had statesmen succeeded in their efforts, the government of the country, slavery would have long since been abolished. Other questions than those which now distract our country would have been the subject of solution at the hands of a peaceful, prosperous, and mighty people. But it was not so ordered. The government was confided to the hands of wicked and misguided demagogues, who, by disregarding the immutable laws of right and justice, have involved us in war; and it is the part of the wise statesman and legislator to accept facts as he finds them, to apply controlling and enduring principles, and to evoke beautiful order out of the sanguinary chaos that surrounds us. This we do by inaugurating a system of paid labor that shall be in harmony with the laws of the age and Christian civilization.

The bill under consideration, Mr. Speaker, is well calculated to produce these results. The committee charged with its preparation has considered it in no narrow or partisan spirit. The majority of the committee beheld the great need of a bureau as it contemplates. They have called from far and near the wisest men. They have heard slaveowning and other citizens of the rebellious ter-

the proclamation of the Commander in Chief of our Army and Navy, tens of and hundreds of thousands to our standard and within our lines broad territory to which we look for supplies of cotton, rice, sugar, and to a wide waste, overgrown with weeds. The bill proposes, by means simple, constitutional, and inexpensive, nay, by which millions, many millions, will be added to the Treasury of our country; to cultivate so much of the land to employ in their cultivation so many of these people as have come or within our lines. In the cultivation of its lands a nation finds its weakness none can suffer from the employment of idle laborers on abandoned lands.

The future welfare of the freedmen demands such action. They must be permitted to contract habits of idleness, indolence, and vagrancy. The well-to-do people of the North demands it. They need the commodities yielded by the South. Their industry is paralyzed by the want of cotton which will be supplied by the labor of these people. The world at large demands it. The absence of the well directed toil of these very people upon the neglected lands now and within our lines has caused gaunt want and starvation to stalk through the manufacturing districts of Great Britain and the continent. And it is our duty, by legislation, to stanch these wounds, as we can do by the coming autumn. The provisions of this bill are well directed to that end. Humanity, the spirit of the nineteenth century, and Christian civilization demand its immediate passage.

Happily, I need not dwell on its details. They were elaborately explained by my colleague on the committee when he introduced the bill to the House. On that occasion he challenged the free, frank, and full discussion of the bill; and no response has been made to his challenge? The gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. McKim], the gentleman from the Brooklyn district of New York, [Mr. KALBELEISCH], the gentleman from the city district of that State, [Mr. Brooks,] have all spoken in favor of the bill; but they have not discussed its details. They have not attempted to show the provisions in it that are constitutional, illegal, or unwise. They have spoken upon it inveective and denunciation; but its details and its spirit they have not touched. Indeed, the gentleman from New York [Mr. Brooks] said:

"But, Mr. Speaker, it is vain for me to attempt to discuss the details of this bill, for which has doubtless been canvassed and settled and decided upon elsewhere. I will not waste the time of the House in a futile discussion of its details."

Futile, indeed, would have been the discussion had the gentleman attempted to verify his denunciation of the bill by pointing out the provisions which justify it. He chose rather to evade the bill, its objects, and its provisions. He entertained us with incoherent rhapsodies, which would have been very welcome to the committee of the Whole on the state of the Union where we speak for buncs of provisions which sounded dreary and melancholy enough in connection with a grave subject that which should properly have engaged the attention of the House.

Sir, in the absence of assailable provisions in the bill, the gentleman poured out his indignation upon the grand old Puritan State. He said:

"I know the spirit of Massachusetts. I know her inexorable, unappeasable, demoniac spirit. I know that what she decrees she will execute, as when she ordered the burning of the Quakers, or the scourging of the Quakers, or the exile of the Baptists to the rocky mountains of Narragansett or to the mountain fastnesses and glens of New Hampshire, where my ancestors were banished. Hence when, as now, she decrees on the African, I tremble for the million of hitherto happy human beings now doomed to extermination."

And again he said:

"The spirit of Massachusetts has done in two or three years only what Christ, or the Christ, was twelve or fifteen hundred years in accomplishing in the Roman empire."

Sir, I am no son of Massachusetts or New England as the gentleman said. I am a member that, in my wayward youth, being free from the indenture that binds the apprentice, but not having attained manhood, I wandered to native Pennsylvania, counter to the current tide of emigration, in pursuit of fortune, and found a home in Massachusetts, and I may be pardoned if I permit me to freely testify my gratitude to her in whom I found a gentle and foster-mother. I thank God for the Puritan spirit of Massachusetts. A friendless, and in pursuit of wages for manual toil, I found open to me in the city of Boston the science, history, and literature of the world. At a cost that no laboring man did not feel I found in her lyceums and lecture rooms the me-

weight American civilization will be earned; and round four years of my well paid toil worth to me what the same number of years in a college might be. I thank the men of Massachusetts, as will the scholars in public schools, for their principles in the city of Charleston in good time. They may be black, they may be yellow, but when the civilization of Massachusetts shall have penetrated that dark city, and fashioned its institutions as it pleased, the pleasure of the pupils in the schools will be to thank God night and morn- ing for the spirit of Massachusetts which kept liberty alive, and finally brought it to the entire people of the country. Yes, sir, Massachusetts in the past century has given a practical application to those principles which in twelve centuries gave freedom to Europe, and are about giving it to all the people of the world. Not without war, however; and the gentleman ignored the teachings of history when he said that it had been done without war in Europe. Sir, the history of the contest for freedom in Europe is a history of continuous, sanguinary, and destructive war.

of the South. Thus in Louisiana, of the free colored people, 81.29 per cent are of mixed blood, while in Pennsylvania only 36.67 are of mixed blood. Let me say the latter are nearly all of southern birth. I remember that litigation was pending in our courts between two colored natives of Charleston were on one occasion about fifty witnesses in court. Some of my colleagues for the occasion. The contest was between Robert J. Douglass and Wm. Kinson and among the fifty witnesses, all of whom were natives of Charleston, South Carolina, and its immediate vicinity, there was not a black or a white man. The 20 of mixed blood. And in behalf of Pennsylvania I claim that the South has by far the greater portion of what we have of that stock. In Alabama the percentage of mixed blood is 77.99, and in Vermont 27.08. In Texas it wells to 71.96; in Rhode Island it sinks to 25.23; in South Carolina it rises again to 71.96, notwithstanding her exportations to Pennsylvania and elsewhere; in Connecticut it is 22.04. In North Carolina it is 71.59; in New York it is 15.88. In Florida 66.99; in New Jersey it is but 13.64. But these, you say, are freed people and persons whose fathers, unwilling to sell their own blood, have manumitted their children. Let us look, then, to the statistics of the slave population. I find the census of 1850 there were of mixed blood among the slave population 6 per cent; and in 1860 so busy had the pro-slavery Democracy been in augmenting the numerical power of the institution, that the 7.30 had swollen to 10.41; the negro race is to be saved as a distinct one, the only way to do it is to free him from the embrace of the slaveholders, acknowledging the humanity of the race, give him the rite of marriage, and teach him those great truths which accord with the moral principles of the gentlemen from New York, in twelve or fifteen hundred years gave freedom to the negro race in Europe.

But enough and something too much of this. Indeed, I crave pardon of the gentlemen for having followed the gentlemen from Ohio so far in this discussion.

It is not for me, Mr. Speaker, to predict the fate of races of people. It is for me to disclose the providence of God with reference to our country. "Sin is to the day is the evil thereof." My business, and yours, sir, and that of the House, is to legislate wisely for the remedy of the evils that now beset our country. The country, the world, humanity at large needs the labor of these freed men upon the broad lands abandoned by rebel owners, and I beg the House to pass such a bill as the sure means of securing present blessings and future peace and prosperity.

The gentleman from New York [Mr. Brooks] said further:

"I must accept facts accomplished, and abide by the consequences. Hence I recognize the fact of slavery; hence I intend to act hereafter upon that recognition, because it is a fact. So far as I have influence I intend to withdraw that question from the exciting of the day, and to go before the people upon other matters of difference."

Sir, I hail the gentleman as friend and brother in the good work of the day. I welcome him as I hope soon to welcome to the ranks of the friends of freedom the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. Cox,] who told us that the Democratic party had been a pro-slavery party, and seemed to me to be paving the way for coming forward and joining those who bear the standard of progress. Yes, I shall welcome him too, addicted as he is to persiflage.

But the gentleman from New York says that slavery is dead. Let us give it a burial. Let us erect to its wicked memory a monument. Let us close the nation's republic with a stone so weighty that it shall preclude the possibility of a reversion. Let us put over it the Constitution of the United States, having first therein that slavery or involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, shall be forever prohibited within the United States, or any State thereof, Territory belonging thereto. When we shall have done that, slavery will be dead, and the United States be freedom's harbinger to mankind, offering peace and justice to the oppressed of the world. Will gentlemen give us a vote of amendment, and thus attest the sincerity of their conversion?

But something more is to be done. Slavery is not quite dead. It holds fastness still in Kentucky, where slaves are gathered from all the surrounding States. Let it be in the act of death. We may consider it dead, and pass on to the next thing. Having eradicated chattel slavery, let us unite in securing freedom to the

...ing to work for moderate wages, to promptly paid, docile and easily managed,
...ring among themselves, of temperate habits, cheerful and uncomplaining under
...ever they are treated with justice and common humanity, (in the southern climate)
...on the average, to work as long and as hard as white laborers, whether foreign

...ch people are capable of taking care of themselves. Let us then give
...indeed. We have struck the shackles from their limbs, but they are
...children. They need such guidance and assistance at the hands of the
...as a faithful guardian would bestow. They have not owned themselves.
...been a rite denied them. They were not permitted to identify them-
...children by the use of family names. History, science, and literature
...led books to them; nay, it has been a felony to teach them to read the
...They, their wives and children, have been numbered, counted, bought
...horses, cows, and other cattle on the plantations of their owners.
...o more. They are sober, industrious, and skilled in the labor which is
...ake these broad acres productive, and all that they need is guidance,
...a battle of life, and fair wages for fair day's work. Let us, then, by
...s of this bill, secure these blessings to them, and they will prove their
...erty.

...tleman [Mr. Brooks] says they will be destroyed; that a harsh and
...will exterminate them; that liberty is no boon to them. In this he
...eory of the despot and the aristocrat of every age and country. No
...ir judgment, fit for freedom till he has got used to its enjoyment. I
...that liberty is not a superstition, a name, an uncertain tradition. It is
...well embodied in our political institutions, and is confirmed by the
...and political life of New England. Freedom, sir, is for the laborer.

"Bread

And a comely table spread,
When from daily labor come,
In a neat and happy home
It is clothes and fire and food
For the trampled multitude."

...this bill. Let the commissioners it calls into being see that abandoned
...aved. Let the freedmen feel that he is a man with a home to call his
...family around him, a wife to protect, children to nurture and rear, wages
...and received, and a right to invest his savings in the land of the country,
...find that no race will prove itself able to blot out of existence these
...men of toil. According to the gentleman's theory, the Irish race is rapidly
...from the world. Look at the census and behold its frightful exhibit.
...population of Ireland was 8,175,124. In 1861, after a lapse of twenty
...it shrank to 5,764,513. Is the Irish element therefore disappearing?
...ing an empire of Australia. It is taking advantage of our ridiculously
...iprocity treaty with Canada, and building up a rival power beyond
...the names of Corcoran, Mulligan, and Meagher tell you what it is doing.

Although the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. HARRINGTON] would ex-
...lt from the right of citizenship and confine it to the Anglo-Saxon alone,
...r was when the Irish element of humanity was exercising so wide, so
...beneficent an influence as it does to-day, when the little island of Ire-
...rently being depopulated. You need not fear that this black race will
...Give these people homes, the sense of proprietorship in the land, fami-
...ly, the pleasures and power of science, literature, philosophy, and the
...gion, and you need not fear that you can corrupt them as you have done
...r annihilate them by your power. The glowing South, the land of the
...al to them, invites its own development and will insure that of her race.
...e of the South understand this matter better than we. I find in the
...s *Times*, of December 16, the proceedings of the convention of the friends
...n the State of Louisiana. It was largely attended by the ablest and best
...Orleans and the contiguous parishes. Thomas J. Durant, Esq., who for
...has illustrated the glorious profession of law at the bar of Louisiana,
...d, on taking the chair, said:

...izens of the convention, friends of the cause of human freedom and of liberty, I feel
...d by the sentiment which is before me, with our common feelings and thoughts

seedings of a mass meeting of colored people of New Orleans, held in the preceding evening. I read extracts from a condensed account of taken from the columns of a leading New York Journal, remarking that the reports are all sustained by the report to which I have referred:

"A meeting of the colored people of this city was held last evening in Lyceum Colonel McKay, one of the commissioners appointed by the President to investigate the negroes emancipated by act of Congress, and the President's proclamation 1863. Long before the hour of commencement every seat in the vast hall was filled and all available standing-places were densely packed above and below.

"It is no exaggeration to say that a more respectable audience, so far as external appearance was concerned, was never assembled in New Orleans. The female portion especially dressed, and looked as tidily and as genteelly as the audience to be found in your fashion on the Sabbath. Many of the quadroons and octoroons were of surpassing beauty, and their countenance expressed intelligence, refinement, and good breeding.

"The white gentlemen present, who had spent much time among the degraded and wretched of South Carolina, were astonished to find before them an audience so well dressed, so intelligent in appearance, and in every respect so thoroughly competent all that should be said to them. It is also interesting to know that this Lyceum hall was the largest room in the city.

"The Rev. S. W. Rogers was appointed president of the meeting. The proceedings commenced with prayer by a clergyman present, after which the chairman stated the object of the meeting. He then introduced Colonel McKay, the commissioner from the President.

"This gentleman on taking the stand was received with great applause. In a short time he stated to the audience that the people of the North and the President felt the deplorable condition of the colored population of this city, and that the President had sent a special commissioner to inquire into their condition. He had visited their schools, and was favorably impressed with the progress they were making. They must go on in the same way, and must depend in a great measure upon their own labors for their salvation.

But my time will not allow further extracts.

Gentlemen say that the bureau proposed by this bill is to be expensive and burdensome; that if the system could be made lucrative, they "would love to see it." The blacks do not ask you to give them work and wages. They wish to pay liberally for all beyond this. They point out a name, known as Tom, Jee, and Dick, have rented their one, five, ten, and twenty acres, and have produced a large amount of cotton, on which they pay a duty of two cents per pound. I find in Mr. Yeatman's report on the condition of the Freedmen of the Mississippi the following statement on this subject:

"I visited quite a number of freedmen who were engaged in planting cotton and raising corn.

"Lark Johnson, colored, on the Albert Richardson place, will make five bales of cotton sufficient for his family and stock, and has sold \$300 worth of vegetables. He has no expenses without aid from the Government. He commenced work last May.

"Bill Gibson and Phil Ford, colored, commenced work last May, and will make cotton. They occasionally hire a woman or two, and have paid their hands in their own provisions.

"Sonoma Richardson, colored, on the Sam Richardson place, will make ten bales of cotton. He has one hand to assist him, and has a good garden and corn.

"Richard Walton, colored, will make seven bales of cotton. He has only had gathering it. He has no garden, but has provided for himself, and paid for everything.

"Henry Johnson, colored, will make eight bales of cotton, doing all the work himself. He has no garden, but has provided for himself, and paid for everything.

"Moses Wright, colored, will make five bales. He has had his wife and two women and all have paid their own way.

"Jacob, colored, on the Beckman place, has made seven bales of very fine cotton, and equal to any ever grown in this section. He had some assistance.

"John Blue, colored, an old man, has made two bales of cotton.

"George, colored, aided by two women, has made eight bales of cotton.

"Mary, colored woman, whose husband was killed by the rebels, will make three bales of cotton. She had two boys to aid her in picking, at fifty cents per day.

"Peter, colored, and his son, have made two bales, and raised a crop of corn.

"Ned, colored, will make two and a half bales of cotton, besides his corn.

"Charles, colored, will make two bales of cotton, besides his corn.

"Sancho, colored, works part of the Ballard place. I was informed he would make two bales of cotton. He works about twenty-seven men, women, and boys. I called to see him, but he was absent.

"Patrick, colored, on the Parron place, near Millikin's Bend, has made about two bales of cotton. He has six or seven persons to aid him.

"Bob, colored, will make nine or ten bales of cotton on the same place.

"Prince, colored, will make six or seven bales of cotton.

Adjutant General Thomas also tells us that he has leased fifteen plots of land to freedmen, and that they worked them well and judiciously raising one hundred and fifty bales of cotton, on every pound of which the

	Bales.	Bales sold.	Netting
ward.....	47
xwell.....	28
.....	12
others.....	66
ny.....	27	6	\$1,461 25
ley.....	7	3	790 42
n.....	2	2	504 84
ch.....	75	29	6,897 43
is.....	31	9	2,251 69
son.....	10	7	1,642 18
od.....	11	9	2,661 12
ulker.....	5	5	1,247 60
.....	14	2	580 61
odin.....	4	4	1,023 94
.....	28	25	5,885 60
number of bales raised.....	367	101	
s of 161 bales sold.....			\$24 239 50
e of 276 " at \$240.....			66,240 00
			<u>\$90,479 80</u>

contraband, having twelve bales of cotton as working capital, may yet earn himself a "local habitation and a name." General Thomas' arrangements these people were hired at seven dollars a man and five dollars for a woman. Under the influence of this bill their wages have been raised to twenty five dollars for a first-class man, and fifteen dollars for a second-class, and fifteen dollars for a third-class man, instead of being compelled to labor for five dollars a month, or for eighteen, fourteen, and eleven dollars.

Calculators, when they leased lands, said they could not work them and pay the rent; but when the lettings of hands came to be made there was much competition for laborers at the enhanced price. On this subject Mr. Yeatman says:

There were those who stated that plantations could not be leased, if they had to pay the wages required, say for men graded No. 1, twenty-five dollars; No. 2, twenty dollars; No. 3, fifteen dollars; women of the same grades, eighteen dollars, fourteen dollars, and twelve dollars; but, notwithstanding, when the time for leasing came, there were none that would lease on this account."

Any advantage to ourselves is a mean argument to suggest; but let me ask the men of the Northwest do not wish to create millions of consumers, millions of their great staples? I know that Pennsylvania and New York will not complain if these four million people who have been non-consumers of our products shall send each fall and spring to buy the products of their own country. It will do the North no harm to see these freedmen and their families settled rather than in dog hutchies called slave quarters; to know that they are settling on their floors, furniture in their rooms, and Yankee clocks on the walls; and that when on the Sabbath day they repair to the village church, built by their own generous contributions, they dress as their taste may dictate.

Mr. Speaker, is not a political bill. It is required by the exigencies of the times.

We are in the midst of a revolution, and it is no answer to the demand of a bureau to say that there has never been a Freedmen's Bureau before. It is no answer to say that there is no precedent. Gentlemen turn your vision to the future, for to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow again will come, and will bring new conditions and new duties; and the man who is not prepared to confront the morrow is not fit to legislate for the leading nation of the world.

Gentlemen inquire whether this bill will benefit the white man. Yes, it will. And that among the eight million whites of the South, with scarcely any other labor among them, for foreign labor has been excluded by the system of slavery that prevailed—among the eight million whites there are more than one hundred thousand more who cannot read or write than are found among the eight million whites of the North, though these embrace almost all the uneducated foreign-born who have emigrated to this country. Under the provisions of this bill, by which the colored man who has never

and benefit of the aged and maimed people and motherless children, and the of schools. If the quantity of land applied for should be cultivated, it will yield from twelve to fifteen hundred thousand dollars per annum to be applied to the mentioned, a sum more than sufficient. Those who labor will support themselves, and will be established on every plantation leased where there are children suffering. "The quantity of land applied for will more than employ all the laborers now jurisdiction, but those most conversant with the condition of things at the South will be no difficulty on the score of laborers, that thousands will flock in the month that there is work for them at fair wages. They have a dread of the Freedmen which so many have suffered and died."

And again:

"By a judicious fostering of the system of labor proposed, it will not only relieve the charge of many thousands of these people whom they are now feeding, maintaining in idleness, and who must if so continued sink into a deeper state of degredation than they were as slaves. With protection such as is asked for, all will find at fair wages, and will be able fully to support themselves, besides putting much Treasury in the way of rental and tax and duties on cotton. If the number of land applied for are planted and the product derived from it as anticipated, a revenue of eight millions may be calculated on."

But my time is almost spent. I appeal to gentlemen to let this bill pass, rather still, to aid in its passage, and for once at least give

Thanks for the privilege to bless
By word and deed
The widow in her keen distress,
The childless and the fatherless,
The hearts that bleed."

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